U.S. Reaction on India's decision to send Indian troops in Iraq

2000. SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA:
SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the reaction of the U.S. Government to the decision of the Indian Government not to send troops to Iraq without explicit sanction of the United Nations;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken to reduce India's dependence on the western world, particularly U.S.A. so that the country could adopt an independent view on all international issues?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) Yes.

(b) On 14 July, 2003, the U.S. State Department spokesman stated that, "it is a decision that each country needs to make on its own, depending on its interests and its concerns about the situation in Iraq". He added, "India remains an important strategic partner for the United States, and that the continuation of the transformation of Indo-U.S. relations is something that's important to us and that we expect to see."

(c) India always pursues an independent foreign policy.

Harassment of Indian workers in Gulf countries

2001. SHRI N.K. PREMACHANDRAN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the sponsors in the Gulf countries deny salary and other benefits due to the migrant Indian workers and that they are being harassed;

(b) whether Government propose to undertake and ensure the welfare and benefits of Indian workers and protect them from harassment;

(c) whether Government are aware that women being recruited as cooks and house-maids are tortured mentally and physically; and

(d) whether Government considers to undertake any specific safety measures to protect them from harassment?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) Some cases of harassment of Indian workers by their sponsors in the Gulf countries on account of denial of salary and other benefits have come to the notice of Government.

(b) Indian Missions/Posts abroad render all possible assistance for the welfare of workers and also take up the matter with the employers/ sponsors and local Government authorities. Generally, the grievances are redressed with the help of the Indian Missions/Posts.

(c) A few such cases have been reported.

(d) There are additional measures inplace for recruitment of Indian housemaids to protect them from harassment. These include age requirement of 30 years and above, attestation of documents by Indian Missions/Posts and recommendation of Mission/Post on *bona fides* of prospective employer and employer personally signing the stipulated contract.

Resumption of rail link between India and Pakistan

2002. SHRI SURENDRA LATH:
SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether India and Pakistan propose to renew rail link between the two countries shortly;

(b) if so, by when the train is likely to start running; and

(c) whether foolproof arrangements have been made to ensure that smuggling of narcotics and other contraband do not take place?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) and (b) Prime Minister had on April 18, 2003 extended the hand of friendship once again to Pakistan. Subsequently, India has taken the initiative to move in a step-by step manner to normalize diplomatic and other links between the two